

Married at First Sight [On-Going]

Chapter 4461

“Thirty-five is a little too old,” Serenity said. “Your oldest brother was only thirty when he married me.”

River took a sip of his coffee. The little girl in his arms looked up at him with big eyes, clearly wanting a taste.

“Belle, this is for adults. You can’t have it. Your brother can drink some juice or warm water.”

Belle glanced at her mom, then at her brother, and obediently went back to eating her snack.

If Belle wasn’t allowed to have something, the adults never gave in—even if she cried. But if she could have something, all it took was a glance, and someone would get it for her.

She was a smart little girl.

Snuggled up in Uncle River’s arms, she nibbled her snacks with poise.

Still, nothing compared to the snacks Uncle Tatum made.

Uncle Tatum hadn’t been home in a while, and Belle missed the food he used to cook for her. His meals were the best.

Whenever he came home, he’d make tons of dishes just for her.

“Uncle River,” Belle suddenly called out softly.

“Yes, Belle? What is it?” River looked down at her with a gentle smile.

“Miss you.”

River’s heart melted. He kissed her cheek and said warmly, “Uncle River misses you too. I miss all of you kids. I think about you all the time.”

Maverick chimed in, “Uncle River, why don’t you come home?”

“Uncle River’s been busy,” River replied, patting his nephew’s head. “Once this busy stretch is over, I’ll be home.”

“Husband—!”

A sudden, sharp scream rang out.

River wasn't married, so hearing someone call him "husband" didn't register at first.

"Husband! How dare you have a mistress behind my back and not tell me? You even have two kids! They're already this big! Tell me, how could you do this to me?"

A woman's furious voice echoed through the café, drawing every eye in the room.

River turned toward the voice—something about it sounded familiar.

He saw Romina storming toward him, looking livid.

River's brow furrowed. What is she doing here?

And who was she calling "husband"?

Romina wasn't even married. She was nearly thirty and hadn't had a single boyfriend. She was too career-focused, too intense—no man wanted to date her, let alone marry her.

Good looks only got you so far.

When it came to marriage, men cared more about personality. Beautiful, curvy women were often seen as flings, not wives.

Of course, if you found a woman who was both beautiful and capable, that was a blessing. River's brothers had all lucked out in that department—their wives had great looks, great families, and strong abilities.

Romina suddenly charged up to him and, without a word, slapped him hard across the face.

The loud smack shocked everyone—including River and Serenity.

Even though Eaglioncile was far from Wiltspoon and most people didn't know River was a York, he was still well-known for his success. No one would dare slap him like that... right?

"River! How could you?" Romina shouted. "You're hiding a mistress and two kids! They even look like you! Don't you dare tell me they're not yours. I hate you! I'm furious!"

Before River could react, Romina tried to slap him again.

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But this time, the slap didn't land.

Serenity had already stepped forward and caught Romina's wrist mid-swing.

River was still holding Belle, so he couldn't retaliate. Serenity stepped in to protect the child—she didn't want Belle to get accidentally hurt.

Romina stared at Serenity.

The young woman was beautiful, poised, and clearly strong—she gave off the vibe of a capable, no-nonsense woman.

When did River start seeing someone like her?

River had never dated anyone. Could he really be into younger women?

Romina had to admit—if she were a man, she'd be drawn to someone like Serenity too.

“Let me go!” Romina yelled. “You seduced my husband and still have the nerve to act high and mighty?! Who even are you? Are you his wife? River doesn't even have a girlfriend, so how can he have a wife?”

Serenity, expression firm, said, “I'm River's sister-in-law, not his mistress! Those two kids are his niece and nephew. My husband is River's brother. Of course there's a resemblance—it's completely normal for family members to look alike.”

Romina froze. “You're... River's sister-in-law?”

No wonder she couldn't break free—River's sister-in-law was clearly trained in martial arts or something.

River gently set Belle down beside Maverick, who quickly scooped her up and stared at Romina warily.

Then River stood, took Romina's hand from Serenity, and said, “Sister-in-law, it's fine. Let her go.”

Serenity let go and asked, “River, do you know this woman?”

Clearly, their relationship was tense.

This woman had done it on purpose—made a scene to ruin River's reputation and sneak in a few slaps.

Just look at River's face—it was already red and swollen, her handprint still visible. She'd hit him with full force.

“I'm Romina Lafond,” she said proudly. “Vice President of the Lafond Group. I've known River for years. He's my arch-nemesis—we're constantly battling over business.”

Then she turned to River. “Let go of me!”

River raised a brow. “Romina, what did you just call me? Husband?”

Romina snapped, “No! You heard wrong. I called you a dead man! You’re the one who fights me every day—stealing clients, snatching orders I worked hard to negotiate. I’ve had enough, River! This isn’t over—I won’t let it go!”

River let her go, then pointed at the red mark on his cheek. His voice was cold. “You slapped me in public, Romina. That’s not something I’m letting slide. Business is about skill. If I landed those orders, it means I’m capable. Why are you so bitter? You try to take other people’s clients, but when someone takes yours, you lose it?”

He narrowed his eyes. “You scared my niece, and you humiliated me. If you don’t apologize and clear this up—”

Romina cut him off, chin raised defiantly. “Or what?”

She wasn’t afraid of River at all.

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Serenity’s eyes shifted between the two of them before she suddenly dropped a bombshell: “Just go get a marriage certificate already. You’re already calling him your husband—why not make it official?”

Both River and Romina turned to look at Serenity in shock, their expressions identical at that moment.

Then, they looked at each other again.

“What are you staring at?” Romina snapped at River.

River shot back, “If you weren’t staring at me, how would you know I’m looking at you? And what are you looking at me for, anyway? What’s so great about you? You’re just an old aunt.”

Romina fired back, “Old aunt? I’m still young, thank you very much. You’re the old man here—you’re in your thirties!”

Serenity chimed in, “Old men are a perfect match for old aunts.”

The two turned to look at her again.

River sighed. “Sister-in-law, stop messing with us. There’s no way I’m marrying her.”

Romina crossed her arms. “You act like I want to marry you. I’d rather stay single forever than marry someone like you.”

Serenity couldn’t help laughing.

In her experience, people who said things like that usually ended up slapping themselves in the face later on.

She thought back to her own husband, Zachary. He used to insist he didn't know what jealousy felt like—but now, he was jealous all the time.

Especially when it came to Shawn.

Still, it proved men had sharp instincts. She had known Shawn for years and never realized he had feelings for her sister. Once she found out, she quickly distanced herself.

Now Shawn was married with kids and living a happy life.

And after that, Zachary stopped seeing him as a rival in love.

“Miss Lafond, right?” Serenity said warmly. “I’m River’s sister-in-law. These two kids are mine—they’re his niece and nephew, not what you think. Since you’re here, why don’t you sit down and have a cup of coffee? It’s normal to have competition in business. But outside of that, you can still be friends.”

She thought about how her husband and her cousin Clive had been relatives for years, yet still operated in the same industry. They rarely collaborated because of their family ties, but now and then, if there were smaller projects they could work on together, they would.

When they weren’t talking business, Zachary treated Clive like any cousin—friendly and warm.

“Sister-in-law,” River grumbled under his breath, “she slapped me. My face is still red and swollen. It hurts.”

And now his sister-in-law wasn’t even on his side—she was inviting Romina to coffee.

Whose side was she on?

Romina felt slightly awkward at Serenity’s kindness. Her tone softened a little. “Thanks, but I’ll pass on the coffee. I’d lose my appetite drinking it in front of River.”

River smirked. “Then you should stare at me all day. That way, you’ll never feel hungry again. You could become immortal.”

Romina scowled.

River added, “Romina, you purposely ruined my reputation, made everyone think I was a cheating jerk, and even took the chance to hit me. Don’t you think you owe me an apology?”

Romina took a deep breath and said, “Fine. I apologize for slapping you. But don’t expect anything more. You still snatched my business, and I’m not done with you yet.”

“Snatched? You’ve taken plenty of my business before. Did I ever try to settle the score with you? Miss Lafond, you’re really petty. Honestly, kind of hypocritical.”

Romina shot back, “So it’s fine for you to take my business, but not the other way around?”

She opened her mouth to argue more but had no real comeback.

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Back when River had just taken over his company, Romina saw its potential. She tried to crush it before it could grow, targeting him nonstop—stealing clients, poaching business.

But despite her efforts, River pulled through. He really had what it took.

No wonder his boss was willing to transfer half the shares to him. Without River, the company wouldn’t be where it was today.

And now that River held shares, he’d be even more invested. The boss could sit back and still profit big.

Romina thought to herself: *His boss really knows how to make moves. Smart and forward-thinking.*

River wasn’t going to let her off easy.

“Miss Lafond, you hit me hard enough that my face is swollen,” he said. “I could call the cops, get a medical exam, and sue for damages. You think a simple ‘I’m sorry’ is enough?”

Romina didn’t respond.

But she knew—River was totally capable of doing just that.

After a brief pause, she gave in a little. “I’ll have someone bring an ice pack so you can put it on your face and reduce the swelling.” She pulled out her phone and called her secretary.

The secretary asked what the ice pack was for, but Romina brushed it off. “Don’t ask questions. Just get it done.”

Then, she turned to the people in the coffee shop.

“Everyone, please don’t misunderstand,” she said. “This man isn’t my husband. We’re just business rivals. I was upset after losing to him and acted out. I shouted like that to ruin his reputation and took the chance to slap him. That was wrong of me, and I sincerely apologize. Mr. York isn’t a scumbag. He’s single and doesn’t even have a girlfriend. I’m truly sorry for the disturbance.”

She offered a formal apology to River as well.

“River, my secretary is on the way with an ice pack. Once it arrives, use it right away—the swelling should go down soon.”

She nodded at Serenity in apology and turned to leave.

“Wait,” River called out. “Romina, look at my face—it’s red and swollen. You think just handing me an ice pack is enough?”

Romina turned back, annoyed. “What else do you want?”

If he pushed her too far, she was ready to fight back.

River said, “You’re the one who hit me. Obviously, you should be the one to apply the ice pack until the swelling goes down.”

Romina was speechless. “...River, don’t push your luck.”

She said it quietly, but Serenity still heard—and it sounded like she was grinding her teeth.

“You slapped me,” River said firmly. “So you need to help fix it. If not, I’ll go to the police and let the world know how unreasonable the Lafond family’s daughter really is. Trust me, you’ll be headline news by morning. Do you think any business partner would dare work with you after that?”

Romina stood frozen.

She suddenly regretted slapping him. Now he had her backed into a corner.

She couldn’t let him go to the police—not because of her own reputation, but because it might damage the Lafond Group.

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Taking a few deep breaths, Romina said, “It’s my fault. I’ll wait here until my secretary brings the ice, and I’ll personally apply it to Mr. York’s face until the swelling goes down.”

River motioned for her to sit.

Romina sat down helplessly.

Serenity, who had stayed silent, kept watching the scene unfold with great interest.

Even the two kids were watching.

Bethany was too young to understand, and Maverick didn’t really get it either—but he knew Uncle River had won.

This beautiful aunt was pretty, but she was too mean—she hit Uncle River. Maverick decided not to like her.

Dad always said not to judge people by appearances. A lot of beautiful women had bad tempers. He told Maverick that when he grew up and got married, he had to focus on a woman's character, not just her looks.

Maverick understood what it meant to marry someone—just like his dad married his mom.

But he was still a long way from getting married. Dad said he couldn't even think about it until he was at least 28 or 29, and Maverick was only six.

That meant he still had over twenty years to go.

Dad often teased that Maverick had stolen his wife and told him to keep his distance from Mom since she belonged to Dad.

But Mom was *his* mom, not Dad's, so why should he stay away?

He usually just ignored Dad—Dad was just jealous that everyone thought Maverick was cute and loved him.

He knew Dad favored his little sister and loved her the most.

All Dad ever did was tell Maverick how many words to write, how much math to do, how to practice piano, and how to train in martial arts. He always looked serious whenever he saw Maverick. Mom joked that Dad looked at Maverick like Maverick owed him money and hadn't paid it back.

But Maverick also really loved his little sister—more than anyone.

"Uncle River," Maverick called out.

River gently patted his head and said, "Uncle River is a real man—calm and forgiving. As long as she apologizes, Uncle River will let it go. You're sweet for worrying about me, little guy. My face is just a little swollen."

Maverick glared at Romina and said, "Auntie, why did you hit my Uncle River? My dad said no matter what happens, you can't just go around hitting people."

Though Dad also said if someone really crosses the line, it's okay to teach them a lesson—but Maverick didn't say that part out loud.

Romina blinked. "Um... little guy, this is grown-up business. Don't ask so many questions. Your Uncle River and I... well, let's just say we're enemies. And who would go easy on an enemy?"

Maverick understood that.

His great-grandma and his parents always told him that being soft on your enemies could end up hurting yourself.

“What did Uncle River do to you?” he asked. “Can’t you two just make up and be friends?”

In kindergarten, whenever kids fought, the teacher made them shake hands to show they’d made up and were friends again.

Romina looked at River. He looked back at her. Then he picked up a piece of dessert and placed it in front of Maverick.

“Eat your dessert, buddy,” River said. “You’re too young to understand what’s going on between Aunt Romina and me. Don’t worry about it.”

Maverick said, “Okay,” and really did stop asking. He quietly ate his dessert.

“Hug me, hug me,” Bethany suddenly stood up.

Serenity and River quickly reached out to help her, worried she might fall—but she held out her arms to Romina, asking for a hug.

Serenity smiled, pulled her hands back, and said to Romina, “Miss Lafond, looks like my daughter really likes you. She’s never like this with strangers. Usually, she’s super picky and won’t let just anyone hold her.”